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Educational thinkers and writing gurus have been consistent about what good writing instruction entails for decades. Still, their message has not always nor consistently trickled down to P–12 schools, where writing instruction is often focused on preparing students for success on standardized tests and where prescriptive and formulaic approaches to teaching writing are prevalent, robbing children of the joy of writing (Calkins et al., 2012; Fletcher, 2017). Part of the reason for this might be that some teachers are not familiar enough with authentic writing experiences that adequately engage all learners (Behizadeh, 2019). This article was written to address this concern.

Writing is a critical area in need of out-of-the-box innovative instruction. Writing encompasses cognition and coherently constructing ideas. Writing is also a conduit for identity building, as authentic, meaningful writing allows writers to contemplate their experiences and develop a keener sense of self-awareness. All of these traits make writing a messy process. Writing is also one of the primary ways in which we express ourselves and exposit concepts and topics (Behizadeh, 2019).

All students, regardless of their circumstances, deserve a chance to develop their writing skills and to become effective writers. To accomplish this, they must be given authentic opportunities to write about topics that are meaningful to them with lots of scaffolding and support along the way (Fletcher, 2017). Scaffolding and support come in the form of strategies and other explicit, skills-based instruction that can be used to enhance and promote the success of at-promise writers while engaged in meaningful writing experiences (Lillge, 2019). Integrating

targeted strategies into engaging, authentic writing experiences to scaffold and support writing development is at the core of an effective, balanced approach to writing instruction.

As scholars in the fields of literacy and special education, respectively, the authors view interventions for at-promise learners through different pedagogical lenses. One of us, a special education scholar, approaches teaching and learning more from a clinical perspective and comes to this piece with expertise in a structured approach to literacy teaching (Spear-Swerling, 2019). In contrast, the other authors lean more toward social-constructivist theoretical frameworks and favor a holistic approach. A balanced approach that blends pedagogical perspectives in writing instruction has been shown to be effective (Gadd & Parr, 2017; Moses & Beth Kelly, 2019); thus, we have been intentional about coming together to combine our collective expertise to meet the needs of at-promise students.

Holistic writing instruction as informed by social-constructivism might include such activities as student-initiated journaling, sustained quiet whole-class writing time, sharing of student writing, poetry jams, groups of students engaging in the writing process, peer feedback and editing, student autonomy regarding writing topics, maintaining a journal outside of school, etc. (Au & Scheu, 1996). All of these tasks can be thought of as student-centric, with teachers serving as hands-off facilitators of students' writing growth. In contrast, explicit writing instruction refers to "the explicit and systematic teaching of writing knowledge and strategies" (De Smedt et al., 2020, p. 2) and is characterized by a structured approach with skills-based mini-lessons, teacher modeling, explicit vocabulary development, guided and independent practice, etc. (Archer & Hughes, 2010). While some may perceive holistic, authentic writing instruction and structured, explicit skills-based writing instruction as dichotomous, the authors reject that claim. Instead, we are proponents of blending these two approaches to ensure students are exposed to authentic writing experiences integrated with skills-based instruction and strategies.

The purpose of this article, therefore, is to offer authentic writing experiences that promote critical thinking and creativity coupled with skills-based tools and strategies to help students gain and maintain writing momentum. A balanced approach that harmonizes orientations lends credibility to this piece as an example of what educators joining together to form a coalition for student support can look like. Supporting and fostering momentum for writing, positive attitudes toward writing, and identity as a capable writer have all been espoused for decades (Harris et al., 2019). Built on the extensive work of writing scholars such as Nancie Atwell, Lucy Calkins, Steve Graham, Donald Graves, Don Murray, and others who have sought to integrate research and practice across multiple theories and paradigms for effective writing instruction, this article is positioned to bridge the divide between seemingly dichotomous perspectives. Our goal is to equip teachers to give students reasons to believe in themselves and their writerly capabilities. At-promise youth who have not had a reason to believe they are capable are uniquely positioned to benefit from the balanced approach we share.

In this article, the term "at-promise" (Swadener & Niles, 1991) will be used to refer to a wide range of students who have historically underperformed their middle class, White, English-dominant peers for reasons often outside their locus of control. This category includes students with exceptionalities, culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students, bi/multilingual learners, students of color, students from low-socioeconomic home environments, etc. We prefer the descriptor "at-promise" as opposed to the deficit-oriented "at-risk" label because of its strengths-based orientation. These students deserve special attention and focus, as their capabilities and talents are often ignored (Martínez, 2018).

We begin by delineating tools and strategies that have been shown to be successful with at-promise writers. Examples of authentic writing experiences are then presented to illustrate what holistic writing instruction coupled with strategies-based explicit instruction can look like. As elements factoring prominently into the literacy achievement of culturally and linguistically diverse students and other at-promise youth, motivation (momentum; Griffin et al., 2020), cultural relevance (Yuan & Jiang, 2019), and visual heuristics (Ciullo et al., 2015) are essential facets of the concrete pedagogical strategies and authentic experiences we present. The strategies and experiences presented are not exhaustive but are meant to serve as representative samples and as springboards for teachers to come up with other creative, innovative ways of making writing enjoyable and accessible for *all* students. Finally, we conclude with a brief exposition of how educators can foster momentum for at-promise writers.

Explicit Strategies for Gaining Momentum

We first focus on concrete strategies that can be used with at-promise students. We aim to shift the paradigm on how teachers view writing interventions for at-promise learners by positioning evidence-based strategies as tools for gaining writing momentum, which place learners and their strengths, not their perceived inabilities, at the center of instruction. Before presenting authentic writing experiences informed by constructivist perspectives, our special education collaborator visually presents instructional tools and strategies that teachers can infuse into the experiences they create for authentic writing instruction.

Four strategies are highlighted in Table 1 below to help at-promise writers gain momentum: (a) mnemonic devices, (b) assistive technology, (c) explicit instruction, and (d) visual aids. It bears repeating that motivation, cultural relevance, and visual support were guiding principles in selecting both the tools and experiences presented. Along with brief descriptions of the strategies or tools and citations to support their effectiveness, we provide selected examples for how the strategies can be utilized in the context of writing instruction. While purposeful and meaningful writing experiences are characterized by a number of traits, we have highlighted three characteristics (i.e., exploration of new ideas, reflections on lived experiences, and student autonomy) to show how they align with tools that build momentum.

Table 1

Tools and Strategies for Building Momentum

Tool or Strategy	Selected Examples	Selected Characteristics of Authentic Writing		
		Exploration of New Ideas	*Reflections on Lived Experiences*	*Student Autonomy*
Mnemonic Devices Encoding, retrieval cues, and imagery as specific tools to encode and recall of information (Bakken, 2017)	POW, TWA, and TREE for persuasive writing (Harris et al., 2017); VIPCOWS for steps of the writing process (Ogletree, 2019)		✓	✓
Assistive Technology Any item, piece of equipment, or product system used to increase, maintain, or improve functional capabilities (Harper et al., 2017)	Word processors, smart pens, multimedia and hypertext and text-to-speech (Perelmutter et al., 2017)	✓	✓	✓
Explicit Instruction Instructional delivery characterized by clear description and demonstration of skills followed by supported practice and timely feedback (Archer & Hughes, 2010)	Mini-lessons on the writing process or the different writing purposes or genres (persuasive, expository, narrative, etc.)			✓
Visual Aids Graphic or structural displays to support the organization of ideas and information (Ciullo et al., 2015)	Graphic organizers such as the visual aid for the TREE mnemonic (Harris et al., 2017) or culturally relevant realia writing	✓	✓	✓

Note. Authentic writing involves purposeful and meaningful writing experiences with an intended audience and is characterized by several traits. For this article, we have highlighted three characteristics (i.e., exploration of new ideas, reflections on lived experiences, and student autonomy) to show how they align with tools that build momentum for at-promise writers.

Authentic Writing Experiences

Before presenting engaging writing experiences that teachers can implement in their classrooms and through which skills-based explicit writing instruction can be integrated, our first priority is to explain what we mean by authentic writing. Authentic writing is a vehicle for identity building by allowing writers to consider and reflect on their lived experiences to bring a keener sense of self-awareness (Behizadeh, 2019; Caponera, 2016). By authentic, we wish to convey the value of teaching writing in an unencumbered manner, free from the strictures of test preparation. We also want to present writing for the sake of writing

or as a means for students to explore the world around them and their place in it (Duke et al., 2018).

Ralph Fletcher has written extensively about the kind of writing instruction we are proposing. In one of his latest books, *Joy Write*, he cautions educators to put assessments on the back-burner and to view the writing curriculum through the eyes and hearts of the students they teach (Fletcher, 2017, p. xiii). He calls on educators—and all educators are teachers of writing—to create classroom environments where students "look down at the sentences they have written, and cherish every last word" (p. xiii), where students perceive writing as a pleasurable activity. Not only Fletcher but other experts have presented this consistent message of what writing instruction should look and feel like.

The constructivist perspective is characterized by what some may perceive as an unstructured approach, but which is more accurately understood as a holistic approach that values giving students the autonomy to explore themselves and the world around them. We recognize that some readers may worry about what could be lost when elements of a highly structured writing program are adapted to a more holistic context. While we understand these concerns, we believe authentic writing experiences can effortlessly be incorporated into structured programs. As educators hoping to fashion their own balanced approaches to writing instruction, we encourage readers to seek out ways to replace prescribed, scripted activities with more authentic ones. For example, if a district requires teaching writing using a highly structured curriculum like 6+1 Trait® Writing, there is no reason why the types of authentic writing experiences we will describe could not be adapted to this curriculum nor why students could not choose topics that interest them. However, we acknowledge approaching writing instruction in this way may require some creative insubordination, the kind in which teachers close their classroom doors and do what is best for the students they serve (Gutiérrez, 2016).

Educators who are informed by this balanced, holistic approach seek to provide students with authentic experiences to promote engagement and motivation. What follows are several experiences selected for their adherence to the guiding principles of motivation, cultural relevance, and visual heuristics that educators can build on to enhance the authenticity and purposefulness of their writing instruction with explicit references (italicized as parenthetical references) to the strategies shown in Table 1 above. By explicitly referencing strategies, we intend to illustrate how skills-based strategies and explicit, structured writing instruction can be integrated into authentic writing experiences.

Culturally Relevant Realia Writing

Culturally relevant writing instruction (CRWI) brings what students know and understand about themselves into the many facets of the writing classroom as students' cultural integrities are maintained and viewed as an asset rather than a deficit (Winn & Johnson, 2011). Providing culturally responsive writing instruction promotes high achievement among CLD students, one of the largest subgroups of at-promise learners (e.g., Yuan & Jiang, 2019). Winn and Johnson (2011) clarified

that culturally responsive pedagogy honors students in all categories of academic level, class, economic status, ethnicity, or race.

One of the central tenets of CRWI involves teachers getting to know who their students are outside of the classroom through authentic class discussions and conversations (Gay, 2018). One way to do this, no matter the grade level, is to give students the task of bringing in an object (realia, a type of *visual aid*) from home that is personally meaningful to them. This object could range from a beloved favorite stuffed animal that they won at a local carnival to a basketball that has been handed down from an older brother or sister to a drawing of an item that they used to have but sadly lost when their family moved to a new apartment.

Teachers can bring in an example from their own home to model the thinking process of how to choose a meaningful item. When Bethany (the fifth author) modeled how she selected a meaningful item to share with the class, she brought in her rosary, a string of beads used to count prayers, a cherished object from her childhood that she had always kept in a specific location inside her jewelry box. She explained how she would see her grandmother praying with her rosary with beautiful garnet-colored beads and how she had wanted to be just like her grandmother, praying with her rosary so deep in thought. Her grandmother seemed so serene and at peace, and she thought if she had a rosary, she would be able to feel the same thing.

Once students have brought their items to school, teachers can model sharing what their objects look, feel, smell, and/or sound like with the class using descriptive language (*explicit instruction*). Additionally, teachers can provide time for students to ask questions about the item to help provide clarity and detail when describing the item. Then students can do the same, as the oratory aspect of CRWI is crucial (Ladson-Billings, 2009; Winn & Johnson, 2011). Every student having ample time to turn and talk with another student is imperative. During this turn-and-share time, they can describe and ask questions about their meaningful items. This sharing typically leads to a discussion about their lives outside of school and provides excellent insight into the students' life experiences. After the lesson, teachers can provide students with the opportunity to describe their items with the entire class.

After verbally describing their objects, teachers can model telling the story about their item (*explicit instruction*), and then students can turn to their partner and do the same. Telling their stories before writing them provides a scaffolded language-building opportunity. Talking about what they will write helps solidify and organize their thoughts before transferring them to paper or screen. Next, teachers can model writing their object stories (*explicit instruction*). A catchy acronym (*mnemonic*) for descriptive writing such as STORY (Setting, Talking [Dialogue], Oops [Problem], Resolution, Yes [Solution]; Dunn & Miller, 2016) would help students organize their narratives. Then, students can be given time to write their object stories. While students are writing, teachers can utilize this time to conduct writing conferences with individual students. During these conferences, teachers are provided with a window into each student's life outside of school as students' real-life experiences are "legitimized as they become part of the 'official'

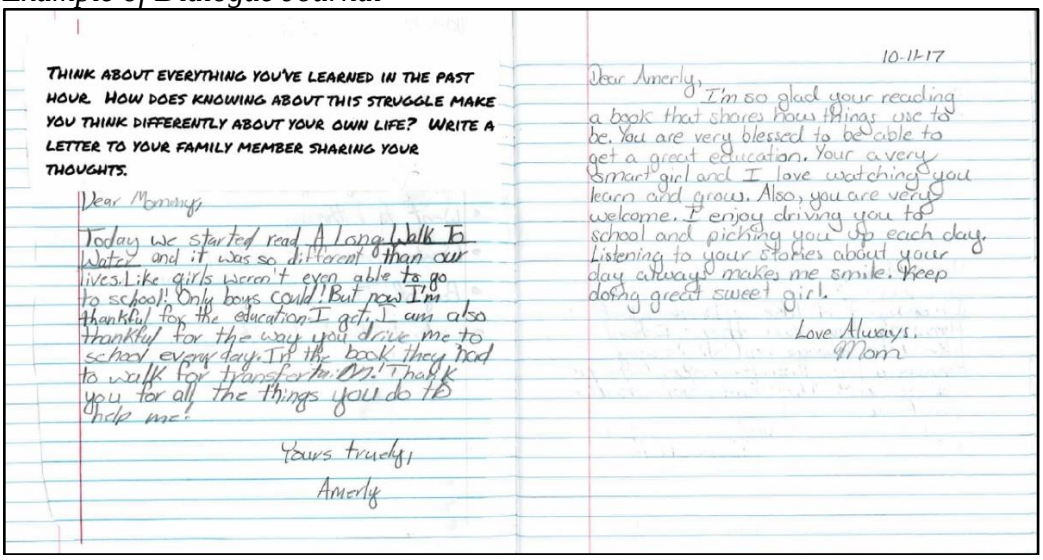
curriculum" (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. 127). Appropriate culminating activities might include displaying the students' objects and their descriptive stories around the classroom or in the hallway and having a gallery walk (Schmidt & Ma, 2006, p. 27) where students take the time to look at their classmates' objects and read their narratives.

Dialogue Journals

Dialogue journals involve a conversation in which a student and valued partner (adult, peer, parent, caregiver, teacher) communicate regularly through writing (Peyton, 2000). Students think, reflect, and write about topics that interest them. Their partners write back, responding to students' writing by answering questions, asking questions, making comments, offering new perspectives and insights, and more (Figure 1).

Figure 1

Example of Dialogue Journal



Rooted in students' life experiences and classroom learning, dialogue journals help learners build background knowledge, reflect on their learning, and deepen their thinking while simultaneously developing confidence in writing as they become active participants in a non-threatening, meaningful, ongoing, and collaborative written exchange of ideas (Alyahya, 2015; Linares, 2018). Further, dialogue journals are individualized in nature, which means that they are self-differentiated, bringing students' interests, learning styles, needs, successes, frustrations, and the like to the forefront (Alyahya, 2015; Linares, 2018). Thus, dialogue journals become sites of "collaborative literacy support" (Allen et al., 2015, p. 4), allowing teachers to meet students where they are in their journey to becoming skillful readers and writers.

The types of dialogue journals that teachers can utilize in the classroom vary, but one specific and promising type of dialogue journal is the Family

Dialogue Journal (FDJ), which involves meaningful and ongoing written conversations between the family, the student, and the teacher (Bega et al., 2012). Personal stories can challenge dominant understandings and help overcome differences (Delgado, 1989/2011). Inviting families into the learning space positions them as assets for instruction by bringing their interests, experiences, and cultural backgrounds to the forefront. FDJs establish valuable connections with families by opening doors for them to contribute to the curriculum by responding to their child's learning. In turn, students learn about their families' lived experiences, make connections between these experiences and classroom instruction, and discover that knowledge extends beyond the walls of the classroom (Allen et al., 2015).

Jennifer and Bethany, the fourth and fifth authors, have experienced the benefits of dialogue journal writing in an after-school book club they facilitated with fifth-grade students at a local elementary school. For this experience, they invited students to write entries to a valued partner (e.g., student teacher, classroom teacher, family member, etc.) based on the students' responses to a novel they were reading as part of the book club. The book club participants' level of engagement and effort was high because they had a specific audience in mind, and they valued the responses they hoped to receive from their partners. The students enjoyed reading the replies from their partners and getting to share their written conversations with the book club group. For example, a fifth-grade participant shared a lengthy back-and-forth written conversation with a student teacher about their unique reactions to a series of intense and significant events that unfolded in that week's reading. This fifth-grader was so excited about his dialogue journal conversation that he stopped Jennifer and Bethany in the hallway that day to tell them about it and to ask if he could be the first to share at the book club that afternoon. Witnessing first-hand students' excitement about writing as well as their increased motivation to write showcases the value of dialogue journals and the importance of the authentic audience they provide.

Dialogue journals can be used with students of all ages, ability levels, and language backgrounds, though adaptations may be necessary. For example, students with exceptionalities or those who are differently-abled may need access to a word processor, a pencil grip, a touchscreen application, dictation software (*assistive technology*), or a graphic organizer (*visual aid*). Dialogue journals can be used to respond to texts, solidify content learning, or simply as a place for students to flesh out ideas, express feelings, ask questions, and share personal stories. These entries may even become first drafts that students continue developing and getting feedback on. Teachers may, on occasion, invite students to develop further an idea, particularly poignant story, or evidence of learning as the dialogue journal structure offers students a safe and supportive space for workshopping pieces of writing. Dialogue journal entries may even serve as a springboard for structured minilessons on the writing process (*explicit instruction*). While privacy, lost journals, and lack of student/parent/caregiver participation should be considered when implementing dialogue journals in the classroom (Alyaha, 2015), the process "doesn't have to be perfect for the journals to have an impact in the classroom" (Allen et al., 2015, p.

10). The deeper connections made with one another and to the curriculum through dialogue journal writing enhance the learning experience for all involved.

Photo Stories

Photo stories provide students with opportunities to create narratives that incorporate photography and writing in such a way that the two "cross-pollinate" one another (Ewald, 2012, p. i). Using photo stories in the classroom introduces teachers and students to an alternate storytelling approach and provides students with a means for sharing stories about their rich and varied outside-of-school lives. Inviting students to use personal photos for writing allows them to highlight their strengths, interests, and talents, which are often overshadowed by test scores and numeric data. Student-created photo stories also provide an authentic means for students to contest those numbers by qualifying students in ways that privilege their passions, hobbies, abilities, and life experiences (Allen, 2018; Delgado, 1989/2011). Moreover, when teachers gain insight into their students' talents and interests, they can then teach into those strengths, making students feel more engaged and successful because their passions and areas of expertise are being nurtured. Additionally, students can share their photo stories with classmates to form networks and connections with their peers.

While students are often familiar with narrative writing, they have little experience writing photo stories. Mentor texts work beautifully to familiarize students with this writing format, and they build excitement about the upcoming writing project. Mentor texts, such as those that follow, serve as a guide for helping students make noticings and discoveries about the structures and writing crafts that are often used in this type of writing:

- *My Painted House, My Friendly Chicken, and Me*, by Maya Angelou and Margaret Courtney-Clarke
- *Daddy and Me: A Photostory of Arthur Ashe and His Daughter Camera*, by Jeanne Moutoussamy-Ashe
- *Mom Can't See Me*, by Sally Hobart Alexander and George Ancona
- *Can we Help?: Kids Volunteering to Help their Communities*, by George Ancona
- *Big Sister, Little Sister*, by Marci Curtis

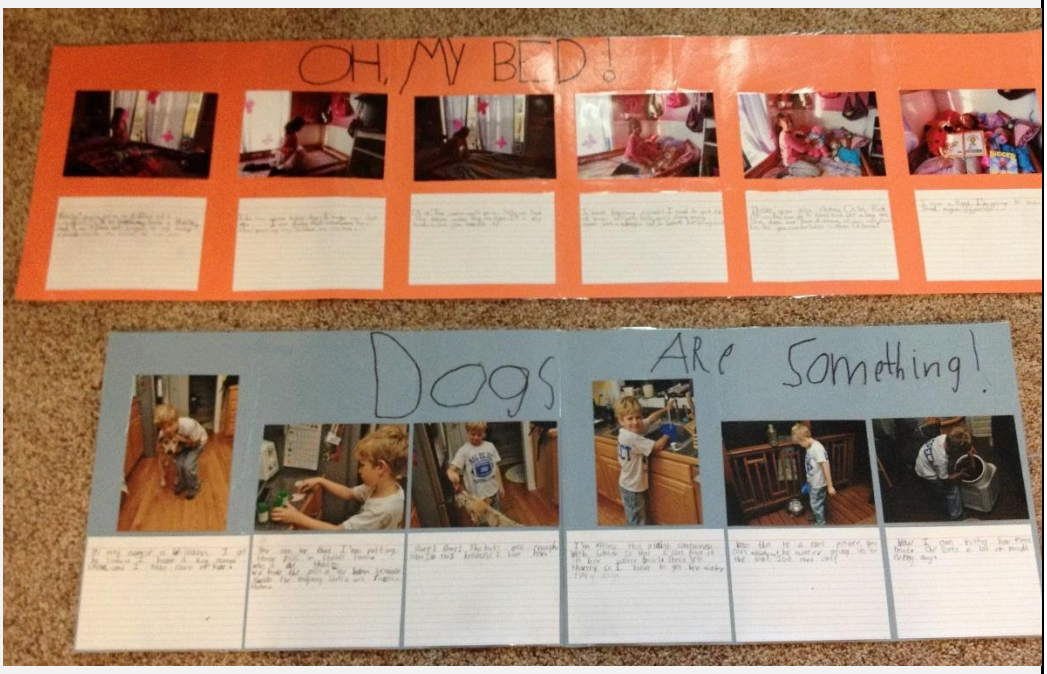
After students have read and studied photo stories as a format and have developed sufficient background knowledge about the genre, they are ready to begin exploring the process of writing one. Teachers should first model this process by bringing in and writing about their personal photos (*explicit instruction*). Modeling this process with authentic photos (*visual aids*) helps students see the thinking behind how the images are organized as well as how they fit together with the writing.

Once students have gained an understanding of what photo stories are and the decisions and processes that go into writing one, they can take or gather photos to use in their photo stories. Then, they can use a storyboard graphic organizer (*visual aid*) to plan a logical sequence for their photos and begin drafting the text to accompany each picture. Students can conference with their teachers and their

peers as they plan, draft, revise, and edit their photo stories, receiving feedback on photo sequencing as well as the effectiveness of their writing. Mini-lessons (*explicit instruction*) can be provided throughout the drafting process as teachers discover recurring issues that need to be addressed. Once students are ready to publish their photo stories, they can use photos, index cards, and large pieces of construction paper to create a traditional or hard copy version of their photo story. The images included (Figure 2) show the photo stories Jennifer's second graders created to share about ways they helped others in their home or community. After they completed a traditional version of their photo stories, they used VoiceThread™ to narrate a digital version of their photo stories (*assistive technology*). Jennifer's experience utilizing photo stories with her students has made evident that inviting students to share about their lives through photographs and storytelling helps teachers look beyond labels and perceived weaknesses and acknowledge gifts and interests among all students.

Figure 2

Examples of Photo Stories



Rebus Writing

Rebus writing offers at-promise students a non-threatening way to be successful and actively engaged in writing. Identifying and naming a symbol or rebus comes relatively easy, even for students who struggle with word recognition (Sheehy, 2002). According to the *Encyclopædia Britannica* (2013), rebus writing dates back to ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics and later 15th-century Europe. The word *rebus* comes from the Latin meaning "not by words but by things" (Boutell, 1863, p. 118). Initially used by monks to convey sacred texts to largely illiterate parishioners, this form of writing has evolved to what educators now know as logographic, emoji, or word-symbol writing.

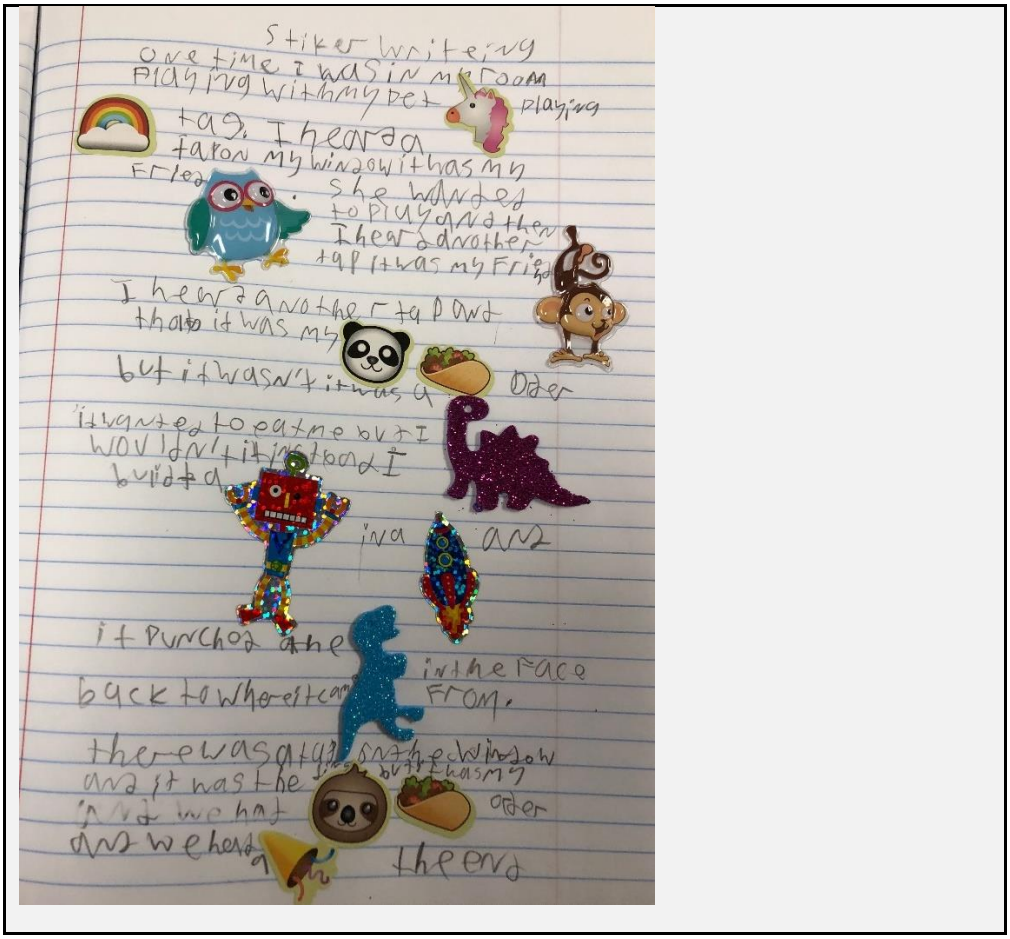
At its most basic level, rebus writing involves students using images or graphics (*visual aids*) to represent words as they write. This linking of words and pictures facilitates metacognition and inspires at-promise writers to engage in what is often considered a daunting task. Studies have shown the effectiveness of this strategy on teaching word recognition (Sheehy, 2002). The focus here, however, is on its efficacy as an initiating experience to make writing as non-threatening as possible. Tamra's (the third author) experiences have shown that at-promise writers, such as students with exceptionalities or bi/multilingual English learners, become more actively engaged when exposed to rebus writing. Regardless of grade level, rebus writing can help writers overcome their initial fear of "finding the right word."

Tamra regularly works with students in area schools that have large percentages of bi/multilingual learners. Many of the students struggle academically and find themselves frustrated to the point of almost giving up and not participating

in class. During one teaching session with bi/multilingual students, students were given inexpensive stickers depicting all sorts of nouns, verbs, and adjectives and used them to prewrite a free-form poem. Students could then choose to substitute the logographs for actual words, keep all of the stickers, or use a combination of both. As shown in Figure 3, most students chose a combination. After allowing them to draft using logographs (*visual aids* and *assistive technology*), their reactions were all positive. One student who had been frustrated for a long time remarked, "I never liked writing until today." Another student who had arrived in the U.S. a week prior participated in class for the first time. He chose stickers and pre-wrote most of his free-form poem using pictures. He consulted with the professor, teacher, and another student as he was creating his poem to help add words that did not have a rebus. After he finished, he was proud to share his poem. Students who spoke entirely different languages were able to communicate their ideas with one another, which facilitated communication and bonding between the different linguistic groups represented in the class. Rebus writing is a way to give students who otherwise would not even engage in writing a chance for their voices to be heard.

Figure 3

Examples of Rebus Writing



Kamishibai Writing

Before there were comics, manga, cartoons, or digital storyboarding, there was kamishibai (Nash, 2009). *Kamishibai* (kah-mee-shee-bye) is a Japanese word denoting paper theater (McGowan, 2010). Allen Say's (2005) picture book *Kamishibai Man* is a good resource for introducing students to this form of dramatic storytelling. Kamishibai is a performance art that includes dialogue and sound effects and is excellent for large group teaching because the reader (storyteller) stands behind the pictures and does not interfere with the vision of the audience (De Las Casas, 2006).

Initially designed for storytelling, kamishibai can be transformed into an innovative and authentic approach to teaching writing. Tamra uses this strategy to teach narrative storytelling to at-promise and bi/multilingual students. After introducing her students to kamishibai, she has students brainstorm a list of their favorite classic stories such as "Cinderella" or "Goldilocks and the Three Bears" because most cultures have a version of one of these tales. The class is then divided into groups of three or four and instructed to choose a favorite story from the lists they created.

During the second step, students use a graphic organizer (*visual aid* and *assistive technology*) to break their chosen tale apart according to the five essential

elements of a story: plot, characters, setting, conflict, and resolution. Teachers can then help the groups break the story down into smaller elements, such as time, character traits, climax, turning points, etc. (*explicit instruction*). During the third step, students replace elements of the deconstructed story with their own story parts and then put it all back together. Students are then exposed to VIPCOWS (Voice, Ideas, Publishing/Presenting, Conventions, organization, Word Choice, Sentence Fluency) as a way (*mnemonic*) to ensure their new stories include all six common traits of writing (Ogletree, 2019). Creating an entirely new story from a familiar story is non-threatening and low-stress for students by providing them with a structure and ideas to construct their own stories. The kamishibai process goes further and involves the students illustrating and publishing their stories on large cardstock with the text on the back of the pictures and then narrating their collectively created stories back to the class.

Tamra's experiences have shown that using a creative form of writing, illustrating, and storytelling like kamishibai benefits at-promise writers. Kamishibai writing incorporates all the areas of literacy, including writing, speaking, listening, and even illustrating, and calls for collaboration and problem-solving. Allowing students to start with a familiar story, break it apart, and then put it back together in their own words alleviates frustration or intimidation and helps all students become more engaged in and enthusiastic about writing.

Concluding Thoughts

Utilizing skills-based strategies such as those presented here (e.g., mnemonic devices, assistive technology, explicit instruction, and visual aids) to scaffold authentic writing experiences distinguishes the balanced, holistic approach presented here. The examples of authentic writing experiences presented are just a few of the many possibilities that could emerge from integrating structured, skills-based writing instruction with holistic authentic writing experiences. As such, we offer educators the following steps to foster momentum and build writerly identities for at-promise writers:

- **Know your writers.** Look for ways to make writing fun and engaging for the students you teach.
- **Create a writing community.** Seek out ways to create a community of writers in your classroom where teachers write alongside their students.
- **Try these strategies out for yourself!** Share your writing experiences and struggles to help demystify the notion that good writing just flows for all.
- **Carefully select culturally relevant mentor texts.** Just because a book features diverse characters does not necessarily mean it connects to students' cultures. The more you learn about your students, the more skilled you become in choosing mentor texts that align with your students' backgrounds and life experiences. Culturally relevant mentor texts also serve as springboards for authentic writing.
- **Give students autonomy.** Allow students to design their own writing projects where students consider their purpose for writing and their audience.

Writing teachers are encouraged to recognize that embracing a balanced approach does not mean abandoning structured literacy or even prescribed writing programs, but it may entail a willingness to step outside of their comfort zones and embrace new ways to meet the diverse needs of their at-promise writers. A balanced, holistic approach to writing instruction that emphasizes both explicit skills-based writing instruction and authentic writing experiences has the potential to motivate and engage even the most reluctant writers.

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